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SUBJECT: Philippines Appears to Moderate Pre-Copenhagen Climate  
Change Stance

Ref: Manila 2329

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Philippines' lead climate change negotiator, former Senator and Environment Secretary Heherson "Sonny" Alvarez, has spelled out a pragmatic position on greenhouse gas emissions, calling for mandatory cuts for 'all the big boys', including China. This replaces earlier Philippine demands for 'deep and early cuts' in emissions of 30 percent for developed countries. Alvarez's statements are in line with comments made by Philippine President Arroyo during the visit of Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack in October. Alvarez credited Philippine environmental Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) with informing the government's climate change position and noted that NGO representatives constituted a large part of the Philippines Copenhagen delegation. Some representatives of Philippine NGOs expressed bewilderment at the GRP's apparent change in position, but also noted that the multitude of bureaucracies and personalities involved in Philippine climate change policy often resulted in multiple and contradictory expressions of policy. End Summary.

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President Highlights Climate Change with Clinton, Vilsack  
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¶2. (SBU) Philippine President Arroyo highlighted climate change in talks with both Secretary Clinton and Secretary Vilsack during their respective November 12 and October 26 visits to Manila. President Arroyo's stated preference for 'workable, binding (emission) targets' during talks with Secretary Vilsack (reftel) was the first high profile deviation from the GRP's standard position of 'deep and early cuts' by developed countries of more than 30 to 40 percent from 2013 to 2017. (Note: The 'deep and early cuts' phrase has been a centerpiece position since the December 2008 Conference of Parties (COP) in Poznan, Poland and as recently as April 2009 climate change talks in Bonn. End note.) The President told the press on November 11 that she is amenable to a climate change agreement requiring countries to make individual commitments to greenhouse gas emission reductions and would no longer insist on deep and early cuts.

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GRP Says China Must Commit to Emission Cuts  
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¶3. (SBU) While Presidential Advisor on Climate Change Alvarez would not explicitly repudiate his signature 'deep and early cuts' phrase in a November 24 meeting with EST&H Officer, he mentioned several times that real progress on climate change mitigation was possible only if 'all the big boys', including China, accepted binding emissions' cuts. He also said that the Philippines was preparing a package of voluntary emissions reductions to present at the Copenhagen talks that would reduce emissions five percent below 2000 levels. He added that technical staff were still determining the specific contributions of particular sectors to the overall emissions target, but said land use (agricultural and forestry) calculations were particularly complicated and time-consuming.

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GRP Financing and Kyoto Positions Remain in Line with G-77  
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14. (SBU) Asked to comment on U.S. proposals to create a new Global Climate Fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) financial mechanism, Alvarez expressed a preference for a financial governance model that allowed the developing nations, 'which will be most affected by the natural disasters', to determine how adaptation and mitigation funds will be spent. He said World Bank or International Monetary Fund-type models were unacceptable. Queried about the role of the Kyoto Protocol post-Copenhagen, he said Annex I country commitments should remain intact, but confessed that he was not familiar with the details of the 'kill-Kyoto' controversy.

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GRP Climate Change Stance NGO Driven  
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15. (SBU) Alvarez noted that in addition to Undersecretaries Lucille Sering, Segfredo Serrano, and Graciano Yumul of the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Agriculture, and Science and Technology, respectively, as well as representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Philippines' Copenhagen climate change delegation would contain a large private sector component. Alvarez said President Arroyo had not yet made up her mind as to whether she would attend the Copenhagen talks. He credited Philippine environmental NGOs with driving the GRP's climate change position, especially in early stages of negotiations when Philippine officials were 'too uninformed and uninterested' to engage

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constructively on the issue. This view was confirmed by all the local and international environmental NGOs we spoke to, who credited Alvarez with 'opening up the process' to civil society participation. Dr. Helen Mendoza, President of the Philippine Network on Climate Change (PNCC), a consortium of ten Philippine environmental NGOs, said the group has worked closely with the GRP on climate change since the 1992 UN Rio de Janeiro Climate Change Summit. Lory Tan, director of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Philippines, said major portions of the GRP climate change position were 'lifted from WWF position papers' that WWF had provided to government agencies.

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NGOs Bewildered by Sudden Loss of Climate Change Clout  
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16. (SBU) All of the environmental NGO representatives we spoke to were bewildered by the apparent change in the GRP's climate change position. 'We don't know who they're talking to anymore' commented WWF's Lory Tan. Maria Belinda de la Paz, representative of Haribon, the Philippine's major biodiversity NGO, said many in Philippine environmental circles assume Secretary Clinton influenced President Arroyo to moderate the GRP's position.

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Multitude of Voices Hampering Climate Change Policy?  
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17. (SBU) Another common theme brought up by NGOs involved in the climate change process was that the numerous GRP task forces, agencies, departments and commissions tasked with climate change functions create unproductive bureaucratic rivalries and preclude a consistent GRP position. Various NGO representatives described how the Inter-Agency Commission on Climate Change, created in 1991, which was originally mandated to prepare the GRP's climate change position, has lost influence to the Presidential Task Force on Climate Change (PTFCC, created in 2007) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Climate Change (created in 2008). To further complicate matters, in its short lifetime, leadership of the PTFCC has passed from the DENR to the Department of Energy, and is currently chaired by the President. Although the recently passed Philippine Climate Change Act (septel) is intended to clarify the

climate change hierarchy, NGO representatives complained that crucial UN climate change for a, such as the 2007 summit in Bali and November's Barcelona talks, featured GRP negotiating teams with dual (or dueling) heads.

18. (SBU) Comment: Recent statements by President Arroyo and Climate Change Advisor Alvarez indicate a welcome moderation of the GRP climate change position. Questions remain as to whether this view will manifest itself as a consistent negotiating position in Copenhagen. Some of the GRP's previous policy appears to have been personality driven, such as the role played at UN climate change conferences by Bernarditas "Ditas" de Castro Muller, a retired GRP diplomat residing in Geneva. Although an environmental advisor to the Philippine government, she is also a lead negotiator and coordinator for the G77 group. In past UN climate talks, Muller has aggressively advocated unrealistically stringent binding emissions reduction targets for developed countries and taken a 'hard G77' line on financing, technology and other issues. However, if President Arroyo leads the delegation in Copenhagen, it is likely the Philippines will maintain a pragmatic approach, in the hope of achieving an agreement that could bolster Arroyo's legacy and help strengthen her and her party for the May 2010 elections. While it remains unclear which Philippine agency will ultimately be responsible for climate change policy, the Philippine vulnerability to climate change ensures that the issue will remain prominent. This gives the USG an opportunity to engage a moderate and influential G77 member in substantive discussions on global actions.

End Comment.

KENNEY